

Remarks as Prepared for Delivery by the Honorable Julián Castro for 2020 Presidential Announcement

The Honorable Julián Castro

Remarks at Julián Castro 2020 Presidential Announcement

San Antonio, Texas

Saturday, January 12th, 2019

As Prepared

Good morning! And buenos dias! Thank you, Mom. I'm guessing some of you are here more for her than for me. So many journeys for me and for my family began right here, and today we begin another one. I'm lucky in this journey, to have an incredible partner with me – my wife Erica. And I have amazing inspiration: our daughter, Carina, and our little boy, Cristián.

I want to thank each and every one of you for joining us. What a great crowd! This place—the west side of San Antonio—is a special place for me.

This is the place my grandmother, Victoria, came to in 1922 when she immigrated from Mexico as a seven-year-old orphan. It's where she grew up, where she worked for years as a maid, a cook and a babysitter while raising my mother as a single parent. It's where my mother became an activist, working to improve the quality of life for her community. It's where she raised my brother, Joaquin, and me as a single parent. Joaquin and I were baptized just over there (pointing) and so were my children. It's here that I got a good public school education, and I had the honor of serving these neighborhoods as mayor of San Antonio.

This morning, I rode the number 68 bus with my brother down Guadalupe Street as we did so many times as kids. And this time I brought my daughter Carina. That was the same bus route that we used to take with my mother to get to school or to her work during the summer.

Look around, there are no frontrunners born here, but I've always believed that with big dreams and hard work, anything is possible. This is a community like so many other communities in our country. A community of good people. Humble people. People who show up for work early and stay late—oftentimes at more than one job—so they can provide for their family.

When they go to bed at night they say hopeful prayers—they want their children to do well, they want good health, they want the dignity that comes from a good job and the peace of mind that comes from being able to retire on their own terms.

This is a community built by immigrants—families from Mexico, yes. But also, from Germany and other countries. Families who came here to build a future. Who came here to serve our country at Fort Sam Houston, and Lackland Air Force Base, and Randolph.

Today, this community represents America's future—diverse, fast-growing, optimistic, a place where people of different backgrounds have come together to create something truly special. And I am proud to call myself a son of San Antonio.

Six years ago, I had the honor of standing before the Democratic National Convention. I said then that the American Dream is not a sprint or a marathon but a relay. My story wouldn't be possible without the strong women who came before me and passed me the baton. Because of their hard work, I have the opportunity to stand here today.

My family's story wouldn't be possible without a country that challenged itself to live up to the promise of America. That was the point of the American Dream: It wasn't supposed to be just a dream. America was the place where dreams could become real. But right now, the relay isn't working.

Today we're falling backwards instead of moving forward. And the opportunities that made America, America are reaching fewer and fewer people.

Today, we're at risk of dropping the baton. And that's why we are here today. Because we're going to make sure that the promise of America is there for everyone.

You see, the lesson I learned from my mother so many years ago in this community is that when we want to see change in our community, we don't wait for it. We work for it.

When my grandmother got here almost a hundred years ago, I'm sure she never could have imagined that just two generations later, one of her grandsons would be serving as a member of the United States Congress and the other would be standing with you here today to say these words: I am a candidate for President of the United States of America.

Cuando mi abuela llegó aquí, hace ya casi cien años, estoy seguro de que nunca se imaginó que solo dos generaciones después, uno de sus nietos formaría parte del Congreso de los Estados Unidos, y que el otro estaría ante ustedes hoy diciendo las siguientes palabras: Yo soy candidato para Presidente de los Estados Unidos.

I'm running for president because it's time for new leadership. Because it's time for new energy. And it's time for a new commitment to make sure that the opportunities I've had are available for every American.

In the years to come, we must go forward as one nation, working toward one destiny. And that destiny is to be the smartest, the healthiest, the fairest, and the most prosperous nation on earth. Again, we must be the smartest, the healthiest, the fairest, and the most prosperous nation on earth. Demanding anything less is a failure of vision. Achieving anything less is a failure of leadership.

To be the smartest nation requires an early investment in our children's education.

As mayor of this city, I challenged the voters to raise the sales tax to expand high quality, full day pre-k for thousands of San Antonio four year olds.

At the time, some said it was unrealistic. Even impossible. Education wasn't my job, they said. And who's going to vote for a tax increase in Texas, anyway? But the future of this community was my job. So I put my faith in the people.

We called our initiative PrekSA, and we brought together business leaders with educators, parents and students to make the case. And in November of 2012 the voters of this city said, "Yes! We believe in investing in early childhood education."

So the next fall I found myself standing outside a Prek4SA early childhood center as the first group of young students arrived for their first day of school. They had their little backpacks on. A lot of them were excited. And some were crying. Truth be told, a lot more of the *parents* were crying.

Sure, there were tears of sadness—of seeing their little ones walking into school for the first time. But there also tears of joy—the joy of knowing a great pre-k education was the first step on the road to a brighter future.

Today, we live in a world in which brainpower is the new currency of success. If we want to compete—and we’d better—we need everyone’s talent. We don’t have a single person to waste.

Here in San Antonio, I made PreK4SA happen. As President, we’ll make PreK 4 the USA happen—universal pre-kindergarten for all children whose parents want it, so that all of our nation’s students can get a strong start. And we won’t stop there.

We’ll work to make the first two years of college, a certification program or an apprenticeship accessible and affordable, so millions more young people and people who are returning to school later in life can get the skills they need to get a good job without drowning in debt.

Now, to be the healthiest nation, we need a better health care system.

Not a health care system that bends to the will of Big Pharma and the big insurers, but a health care system built for the people who need it.

For as long as I knew her, my grandmother was diabetic. As she grew older and her condition got worse, she needed more and more treatment. Thank God there was Medicare there for her. It should be there for everybody. It’s time for Medicare for All--universal health care for every American.

To be the fairest nation, we have to reform and reimagine our justice system. All over this nation, for far too many people of color, any interaction with the police can become fatal.

If police in Charleston can arrest Dylann Roof after he murdered nine people worshipping at Bible study without hurting him, then don’t tell me that Michael Brown, and Tamir Rice, and Aiyana Jones, and Eric Garner, and Jason Pero, and Stephon Clark, and Sandra Bland shouldn’t still be alive today too.

We’re going to keep saying their names and those of too many others just like them who were victims of state violence. We’re going to keep saying that Black Lives Matter, while working toward a justice system where it’s true.

You know what else is true? For far too many poor people who can’t afford bail, an accusation alone can swiftly turn into a jail sentence. In our country, “innocent until proven guilty”

shouldn't just be reserved for the wealthy few who can afford high priced lawyers. It should apply to every American.

We must also reform our immigration system, so that keeping families together – instead of tearing them apart – is our policy. Just a couple days ago, President Trump visited McAllen Texas—just south of here—after claiming that we're facing an 'invasion' at our border. He called it a national security crisis.

Well, there is a crisis today – it's a crisis of leadership. Donald Trump has failed to uphold the values of our great nation.

Yes, there are serious issues that need to be addressed in our broken immigration system—but seeking asylum is a legal right.

And the cruel policies of this administration are doing real and lasting harm. One of the things that I remember most about my grandmother is how she would talk to me about how she came to this country as a child separated from her dying mother. Even as a seventy-year-old woman, when she remembered those moments, she would cry like the seven-year-old girl she was when it happened, sobbing that she never got to say goodbye.

Yes, we must have border security, but there is a smart and humane way to do it. And there is no way in hell that caging children is keeping us safe. We say no to building a wall and say yes to building community. We say no to scapegoating immigrants, and yes to Dreamers, yes to keeping families together, and yes to finally passing comprehensive immigration reform

If we all work together, we can build a nation more prosperous not only for those already doing well, but for everyone.

We can raise the minimum wage, so people don't have to work two or three jobs to support a family.

We can protect a woman's right to make her own decisions about her body, because for women, access to reproductive healthcare is an economic issue.

We can protect the right of workers to organize in an economy that is quickly changing and leaving too many families behind.

We can protect people from discrimination no matter who they love or how they identify.

And we'll work to make sure every American has a decent, safe, affordable place to live.

As housing secretary, I visited 100 different communities—big and small—across our country, from downtown Los Angeles to rural Wisconsin and the Pine Ridge Reservation. This much is clear: we have a housing crisis in this country.

Today, too many families are spending more than half of their income on rent. And that means more families are doubling up, sleeping on the couches of relatives or even on the streets. But you know what? You hardly ever hear about it. That's going to change. We will invest in housing that's affordable to the middle class and to the poor. And I know we can turn things around.

In the Obama administration we made ending homelessness a priority—starting with veteran homelessness. By the time we were done, we'd cut veteran homelessness almost in half. In the years to come, we can do that and more.

The biggest threat to our prosperity in the 21st century is climate change.

Don't let anybody tell you that we have to choose between growing our economy and protecting our planet. We can fight climate change and create great jobs—and we don't have a moment to waste. Scientists tell us that, if we don't get serious right now, the consequences will be tragic.

So we won't wait. As President, my first executive order will recommit the United States to the Paris Climate Accord. We're gonna say no to subsidizing big oil and say yes to passing a Green New Deal.

So, those are just some of the ways we're going to become the smartest, healthiest, fairest, and most prosperous nation on earth—it is our blueprint for 21st century opportunity.

And so you know that this is always—and only—about you: I won't be accepting a dime of PAC money in this campaign. And as President, we will work to overturn Citizens United—to get big money out of politics.

That's why I'm running. And that's what I'm running for. And I'll have a lot more to say about my plans in the days to come.

Throughout our nation's history, even in its darkest days, there have always been patriots who came together to do the hard work to get us closer to our nation's highest ideals—those who fought to abolish slavery, suffragists who organized for a woman's right to vote, a generation that sat in at lunch counters and marched across the Edmund Pettus bridge, the activists at Stonewall, and this generation that is Marching for Our Lives—people who have challenged us to perfect our union.

You and I, we stand on their shoulders, generations of men and women who made beds and made sacrifices, who fought in wars and fought discrimination, who picked crops and stood in picket lines.

They didn't wait. They made our nation what it is today. And now it's our turn to take that baton and to make our nation better than ever. I'm asking you to join me.

You give me your support, and I give you my word: I will spend every day working hard to make sure you can get a good job, find a decent place to live, have good health care when you get sick and that your children and grandchildren can reach their dreams, no matter who you are or where you come from.

We have always been at our best when we're united by something bigger. And in this journey, in the days to come, together we will show that hope can be bigger than fear. That light can be bigger than darkness, and that truth can be bigger than lies.

And as long as we work for it, tomorrow will always be better than today.

So, let's get to work. Vamonos!